1:Arensberg & Kimball E-5 (1932-1934) 1940
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conventional. How much, if anything, survives of medieval commerce in them and how much comes down from the days of the medieval Irish *aonach* is a matter for the historian. In ancient times the fair was a gathering for purposes much more widely embracing than exchange of produce. The *aonach* was often the occasion of a royal or chieftainly court, a bardic contest, and local games. Nothing of this remains today.

Cattle, horse, sheep, and pig fairs are fixed, habitual occasions. Their dates and places of meeting are universal knowledge in the countryside. An extension of medieval English law has made most of them proprietary, making of the right to hold a fair a legal title to be bought and sold and charged for in the shape of tolls. But they are public occasions none the less.

The lore of fairs is an inexhaustible fund of information among the small farmers. Among them, indeed, the size of the local fairs is a matter of local pride. It is an index of the industry and wealth of the region. The state of prices is as much a clue to the fate of the local universe as the financial vagaries of Wall Street or the City reveal the destinies of the world.

All this is natural enough where fairs and local markets represent the chief outlets for produce and the chief source of monetary income. As cattle are the chief concern of the males of the family and source of ultimate success or failure for the family, so the cattle fair is the great testing ground for male prowess, skill, and intelligence. In the market place of the cattle fair, the male command of the family corporation and masculine representation of that corporation in the community makes public display of its stewardship. On this stage, the farmer can meet the outsider on his own terms and with his own weapons of shrewdness and experience.

The farmers criticize bitterly any departure from customary procedure. Even though they complain that the fair

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cattle, the farmer must usually drive the beasts he has sold to the station himself. In the case of horses, the buyer exercises a greater care. A deal is closed not only by the usual handclasps but by the change of halters as well. Horses are put through their paces very carefully, sometimes in secrecy off in a side field or down a dark street. The majority of horses are sold between farmers and destined for farm work, but there is always a strong atmosphere of riches and brilliant chance about the proceedings. Many are the tales of half-bred horses, picked up for a song, that have come to win all before them.

Since most of the fairs are legally proprietary, they are protected by law. In many cases the towns have bought out the rights to tolls from private families, finding them a welcome source of revenue. To safeguard these rights, action may be brought against illicit buyers and sellers. In practice, however, it is only in horse-dealing that the owners of the tolls exercise vigilance, since there the tolls are so great. All this contributes to the atmosphere of importance that surrounds the horse fairs.

Pigs are sold more frequently, especially as they represent a great deal shorter period of development. Every town has its bonham and pig market. Every Saturday may witness a few transactions complete with the same rituals of inspection, repartee, and bargaining, but there are times of greater activity as well. It is generally only in pig markets that women are to be seen at fairs.

The second chief occasions of economic exchange, which afford further examples of the ceremonial surrounding the small farmer's mechanisms of contact with the outside world, are the produce markets of the towns. In them similar enactments of family and community relations are to be seen.

Each market town has its weekly market day. The day is fixed so as not to conflict with that of any other near-by